

**Makerere-Sida Bilateral Research Programme
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By

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It is my pleasure to be with you today to discuss issues about research, innovation and development. The topic is a most timely one. Issues at the intersection of research in higher education, innovation and development might not be topical for much of the developed world because that is what they have been preoccupied with since the dawn of the industrial age. For them the relation between science, technology, innovation and higher education has long been well established. For us, here in Africa, it is heartwarming that such a linkage is becoming concretized in the scholarly community and industry. The linkage is gradually filtering into the national policy apparatuses of various African countries.

I think there is no second guessing on the significance of higher education to national and continental development. Across the spectrum of state, industry and civil society groups, one easily gets a consensus on the importance of research and tertiary education. However this generally accepted altruism about research looks flimsy upon interrogation. Before doing this interrogation on our continental record on research in the last decade or two, let us step back a bit and remind ourselves about the centrality of research.

The linking of Science and Technology (S&T) with Innovation as a policy in many African countries is a recent one. Linking innovation to national development capacity is largely a recent idea in the discourse of national development in most African countries.

The first point is that research is the only avenue for the production of the high caliber human resource for knowledge generation, through research and experimentation leading to creation and adoption of innovation. “Research institutions support knowledge driven economic growth strategies and poverty reduction by generating new knowledge, building the capacity to access existing stores of global knowledge and to adapt that knowledge to local use”. Indeed, “progress in Agriculture, health and the environmental sectors, science, engineering and technology is heavily dependent on the application of such research results and innovations”.

The strength of any University is measured from its contribution to societal problems. Research and innovation today absorbs very considerable resources and frankly, research and development activities have great influence on the policies and growth of Uganda as a whole. Research and innovations must be rooted in the interaction between these activities and economic, social, political and institutional processes. A policy in this direction has been developed to respond to problems posed by the very innovations, R&D, technology and science, and related activities concerned with the acquisition of knowledge (learning) and its uptake/exploitation.

We are mindful that the ultimate benefit of research lies not only in the generation of new knowledge but also in its uptake through the translation of knowledge into technologies, interventions and strategies effectively and appropriately delivered to the end-users. In order to reach this objective, we intend to pursue the entire research process within the context of contemporary knowledge, good ethics, effective policy, adequate resources and international cooperation. Within the context of Makerere University, research, innovations and uptake is managed along multi-level, multi-disciplinary approaches that support the exploration of new ways of using these disciplinary perspectives and methodologies.

The research policy puts emphasis on provision of research opportunities, quality and ethics in research and uptake, efficiency and effectiveness in coordination and

management of research and innovation at Makerere University. Unfortunately, this policy does not address issues pertaining to intellectual property management (IPM)

In achieving the aims of this policy, the Makerere University is committed to working closely with national and international organizations that support and monitor research activities.

Conclusion

I want to conclude on the note of emphasizing that translating research, science, technology and Innovation information and knowledge for popular consumption is a must have skill that we need to provide to our researchers. The social media front is a frontier that we should consider as equally important as the peer level academic journal publication. Recognizing the acquisition of media literacy as part of the vocation of STI researcher will allow for effective diffusion of innovation and assure the taxpayer that his or her money is being put to good use. Policymakers and policy executors will also discover the important work of STI researchers and will find innovative ways of funding our work. The communicative dimension of STI is being underscored here precisely because our STI capacity is tied to the quantum of resource allocation for the sector. We need to find a way to tell our story to stakeholders in Africa. And no other group can tell it better than a well-trained STI Researcher.

I also want to remind us that the link between research, Science and Technology on the one hand and Innovation on the other is Communication. I showed how in Uganda in particular the moment we made the shift from research to research uptake as part of our national development trajectory. That definitive moment moved the work of the scientist from a recluse academic to a development worker. The hitherto recluse academic might have mastered his or her work as a knowledge producer, if even under-resourced. The era of talking Science, Technology and Innovation, and not just Science and Technology means that the STI researcher in Africa has to be engaged in our various national development discourse as pivotal players. This is how Higher Education can speak strongly to national development

Thank you.